



Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller

March 3, 2016

Pickett County's Highway Superintendent Admits to Misuse of County Resources

A special investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has found that Pickett County Highway Superintendent Jimmy Cope directed county-purchased gravel and rock to be delivered to private property.

Mr. Cope admitted that he ordered the gravel and rock to be transported by county employees driving county trucks to be placed on various private properties in Pickett County.

Based upon interviews with Mr. Cope and another highway department employee, they estimated that as many as four loads of gravel per week were placed on private property. Investigators estimate this practice cost the county at least \$13,205 annually.

Mr. Cope claims that he never asked for votes and never received money in exchange for the gravel and rock. Mr. Cope told investigators he would provide county gravel to any Pickett County citizen who asked.

"This activity raises questions about use of taxpayer-funded resources, and it could also place the county at risk," said Comptroller Justin P. Wilson. "Using county equipment on private property could expose the county to potentially unlimited liability in the event that an injury or damage occurred as a result of this practice."

To view the special investigation online, go to:

<http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/repository/ia/pickettcountyhwydept.pdf>

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